

STUDENTS' TUTORIAL

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Educational problems of women in India

In spite of certain outstanding examples of individual achievement of Indian woman and a definite improvement in their general condition over the last one hundred years, it remains true that our woman still constitute a large body of under - privileged citizens. Women of course do not form a homogenous group in class or caste terms. Nevertheless, they face distinctive problems that call for special attention. The Backward Classes Commission set up by the Government of India in 1953 classified women of India as a backward group requiring special attention.

It is inevitable that when this 'backward' group has the major responsibility of bringing up future generations the advancement of society cannot be rapid or take any significant form of development. A changing society and a developing economy can not make any headway if education, which is one of the important agents affecting the norms of morality and culture, remains in the hand of traditionalists who subscribe to a fragmented view of the country's and the world's heritage. The differences between the positions of men and women in society will not lessen; leave aside disappear, as long as there are differences between the education of men and women. Inadequate education or no education is the most important factor contributing to the backwardness of our masses, especially our womenfolk. It is the low literacy among women which brings national literacy figure so low.

This gap which exists between the literacy rates of the two sexes also exists between the enrolment of girls and boys at all levels of education. Right from the primary school to the university, we find that the number of girl students is considerable lower than the number of boy students. According to Article 45 of the Constitution, universal compulsory and free education until the age of 14 was to be achieved by the year 1960. Looking at the present condition of primary education in villages, it seems doubtful that 100 per cent enrolment of girls can be achieved by the end of this century. There is no doubt that we have made great headway in the education of women in the last century. It is unfortunately true of our society that children are sent to school not according to their intelligence or aptitude but according to their sex. Such attitudes need to be changed without further delay if we want to achieve 100 per cent enrolment of the primary school-going children. Although the disparity between the enrolment of girls and boys has been lessening in the urban areas, the gap between their enrolments is still very wide specially in rural areas. The reasons for this are both economic and social.

The economic structure of rural areas is such that children, especially girls, are required to help in household work and perform their chores. Young girls have to look after their younger brothers and sisters, have to get water from the well, have to carry food to the father in the field, etc. Since there is so much to be done at home, they cannot be spared for the luxury of attending a school. The resources of the poor farmer are so limited that he does not have anything to spare for the education of his children. If there are resources available it the boy who is sent to school first. Parents also do not see the value of educating their children specially daughters who would get married after all and be only housewives. Since they cannot see any direct relationship between education and economic betterment, they have very little motivation to send their children to school.

It is still not being realized that there is definite connection between education, good motherhood and efficient house management. People can be motivated to have their children educated only if educational system is directly linked with economic and social development. As long as our education remains oblivious of the felt needs of people to solve their immediate problems and on the contrary, actually alienates them from their natural, social and cultural surroundings, they will rightly resist sending their children to school. Primary education for both girls and boys is what we should be concerned about while planning our policies and allocation funds. It is this sector of our education structure that gets neglected in favor of all sorts of institutes of 'higher learning' and 'research' of a kind that are neither relevant nor pertinent to our pressing problems. The role of women outside home is becoming an important and even essential feature of our present day reality.